

Handout: Isaiah Lesson 21

The blessings the Servant will obtain for his people through his self-sacrificial death have been proclaimed in the fourth Song of the Servant (Is 52:13-53:12) and are explained in detail in Chapters 55-56. In addition to his substitutionary atonement for the sins of the people is the prediction that the Gentile nations will belong to God's Servant. It is an invitation that was first mentioned in the introduction to the fourth Song of the Servant (Is 52:15), and it is repeated again in Isaiah's oracle in chapters 55 and 56 where the grace of the Lord's salvation is to be extended to all people (Is 55:5 and 56:1-9).

The promises Isaiah made in his oracle concerning Jerusalem's rebirth after the return from exile in Chapter 54 must have sounded too good to be true to the Jews of Isaiah's day:

- He promised that the barren people and the desolate land would become fertile (54:1-3).
- He promised that the shameful sins of Israel's "youth" would be forgotten (54:4).
- He promised that God would keep His people with Him forever (54:9-10).

The oracle in Chapter 55 is an invitation to grace and begins with Isaiah calling the people to place their absolute trust in God and to accept:

1. An invitation to a banquet that will herald an eternal covenant (verses 1-3a).
2. An invitation to a renewal of the Davidic covenant (verses 3b-5).
3. An invitation to a renewed relationship with God for all people and the promise of a new exodus that is a sign of God's everlasting salvation (verses 6-9).

The command "come" in 55:1 is similar to Jesus' command in Matthew 11:28-30, and the promise of free spiritual water in John 4:10; 7:37-39; Revelation 21:6b-7 and 22:17.

The symbolic images of the covenant banquet in Isaiah 55:1-3:

1. The imagery recalls the ratification of the Sinai Covenant in a sacred meal in the Book of Exodus (Ex 24:5-11).
2. The imagery recalls the covenant renewal ceremony and the feeding of the people by King David when the Ark was brought to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:12-15, 17-19).
3. The imagery looks forward to the sacred meal of Jesus Christ in the inauguration of a New and eternal Covenant in Jerusalem at the Last Supper (Mt 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:19-20).
4. The imagery looks forward to the eternal banquet of the just at the end of time in the heavenly Jerusalem at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb and His Bride in the Book of Revelation (Rev 19:6b-9; 21:6; 22:17).

In 55:6-11 Isaiah tells the people:

1. They must seek God and claim His promises while there is still time (verse 6).
2. They must yield themselves to God in repentance (verse 7).
3. The people who repent can count on God's forgiveness (verses 8-11).

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for my house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples (Is 56:7c).

The underlined part of this passage is quoted by Jesus in Mt 21:13; Mk 11:17; and Lk 19:46 when He cleanses the Temple His last week in Jerusalem.

Israel's prophets and religious leaders are compared to dogs—usually a derogatory term in Scripture since they were considered “unclean” animals.

- The watchmen/prophets are like “blind” watchdogs that cannot bark and incapable of spiritual insight or speech. They are figuratively “asleep” so they cannot warn the people of danger.
- The religious leaders/shepherds are like “greedy dogs” who only serve their own interests and not the welfare of the people.

12 “Come, let me fetch wine; we will get drunk on strong drink, tomorrow will be just as wonderful as today and even more so!”

In the symbolic images of the prophets, getting drunk on the wine of the covenant that was intended as a blessing is symbolic of rebellion against Yahweh and abandoning the covenant.

In 57:3-4 the Jews/Israelites who have become idolaters are:

1. the children of sorcery
2. an immoral, adulterous race of prostitutes
3. rebels and liars who continue in the sins of past generations

In 57:5-10 the prophet describes the sins of the unfaithful people who engage in idolatry because they lust for power apart from God. The result of their obsession for idolatry is:

1. They sacrificed their own children to false gods.
2. They built pagan worship sites all over the land.
3. They brought their idols and pagan symbols into their homes.
4. They engaged in immoral pagan fertility rites.
5. They engaged in seeking the advice of mediums to consult the dead.
6. They had been so obsessed with their idolatry that they would not repent.

In 57:14-21 for the righteous that did not fall into sin but remained faithful to Yahweh's covenant, God will bring healing and restoration, but He will bring judgment to the wicked. This will be accomplished in four phases:

1. God will build a “highway” to bring His people home (57:14).
2. He will be with the humble and contrite even as He brings judgment to the unrepentant, rebellious sinners who acted out of their own free will (57:15-17).
3. In spite of their past sin, God will proclaim the restoration as He heals, guides and comforts His people (57:18-19).
4. He will warn those who persist in wickedness that they can have no peace apart from Him (57:20-21).